



MARKED UP SPECIFICATION



**SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR INTERMEDIATION BETWEEN USERS AND
ABATAAVATAR PROVIDERS TO PROVIDE VARIOUS ABATAAVATAR
IMAGES TO USERS**

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a method for receiving and displaying images through an electronic network, and more particularly to system and method for allowing users to freely select and use various abataavatar images provided by a plurality of
10 abataavatar image providers.

Description of the Related Art

An abataavatar is another virtual self, expressing the user himself/herself in a cyber space. This abataavatar is generally provided to a user through Internet service
15 systems such as a community site, a portal site or an Internet shopping mall, or sometimes provided directly from an abataavatar provider.

In the conventional abataavatar service, one service system or one abataavatar providing system provides only one type of abataavatar image, so abataavatar images in the system are very monotonous. Thus, young generations who seek variety are apt to
20 be easily tired of their abataavatar, so the monotonous abataavatar image impedes spread of the abataavatar.

In addition, when changes existing abataavatar service or an existing abataavatar provider, the Internet service provider should change its service system since the abataavatar is not compatible.

25 Thus, there is a need to develop a technique which allows users to use various

types of abataavatar provided by a plurality of abataavatar providers without changing the system.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention is designed to solve the problems of the prior art, and therefore it is an object of the present invention to provide a method for allowing users to use various types of abataavatar without system change by using an intermediating system between a plurality of abataavatar providers and an Internet service provider.

10 In addition, another object of the invention is to provide abataavatar intermediating system and method which are capable of interfacing between a plurality of abataavatar providers and a program using abataavatar like an instant messenger of a user terminal.

 According to one aspect of the invention, the present invention provides an abataavatar intermediating system, which includes an abataavatar providing device for
15 storing abataavatar data having abataavatar image and abataavatar item image and providing the abataavatar data through a network; an abataavatar service device for receiving the abataavatar data from the abataavatar providing device and supplying the abataavatar data in a shape of web document or the like; a user terminal for outputting the abataavatar data through the abataavatar service device or a client program like a
20 messenger; and an abataavatar intermediating device for introducing the abataavatar data provided from at least one abataavatar providing device, intermediating transaction of the abataavatar data between a selected one of the abataavatar providing devices and the user terminal, receiving a changed abataavatar image from the corresponding abataavatar providing device in response to an abataavatar change request, and then changing a
25 representative abataavatar image of the abataavatar service device or the client program

into the changed abataavatar image.

Preferably, the abataavatar providing device includes a storage area for storing the purchased abataavatar data for each user; an abataavatar composing unit for generating a perfect abataavatar image by combining the abataavatar image stored in the storage area with various abataavatar item images; a unit for providing the perfect abataavatar image to the abataavatar intermediating device in response to the change request of the user; and a unit for providing transaction information of the corresponding abataavatar data to the abataavatar intermediating device in response to a purchase request of a specific abataavatar data from the user.

Preferably, the abataavatar intermediating device includes an abataavatar purchasing unit for providing an abataavatar data list from at least one abataavatar providing device to users, transmitting a purchase request of a specific abataavatar data from a user to the corresponding abataavatar providing device when the user requests for purchasing the abataavatar data, outputting the abataavatar purchasing information received from the abataavatar providing device to the user, receiving payment information from the user, and then transmitting payment settlement to the abataavatar providing device, and an abataavatar storage area for storing a composed abataavatar image transmitted from the abataavatar providing device for each user.

In this case, the abataavatar intermediating system may further include an abataavatar changing unit for receiving and storing an abataavatar image change request and a changed abataavatar data from a specific abataavatar providing device, and informing the abataavatar service device or the client program of the user terminal that the abataavatar image is changed.

Preferably, the abataavatar changing unit includes a unit for receiving change request information from a specific abataavatar providing device, inputting a change

request item into a wait queue, and storing temporary abataavatar information into a database; a unit for reading the stored change request item from the wait queue and requesting transmission of the abataavatar data to the corresponding abataavatar providing device; a unit for receiving and storing the abataavatar data transmitted from
5 the abataavatar providing device and restoring the temporary abataavatar information stored in the database; and a unit for informing the abataavatar service device or the client program of the user terminal that the abataavatar image is changed.

Preferably, the change request item includes user identification information and abataavatar provider identification information.

10 In addition, the temporary abataavatar information preferably includes user identification information and a temporary abataavatar URL.

The abataavatar intermediating device may further include an abataavatar display unit for providing the abataavatar image stored in the abataavatar storage area to the client program or the abataavatar service device in response to an abataavatar display
15 request from the client program of the user terminal or the abataavatar service device.

Preferably, the abataavatar display unit performs receiving abataavatar display information including user identification information, kind of abataavatar, abataavatar countenance or the like from the client program of the user terminal or the abataavatar service device; determining on the basis of the abataavatar display information whether
20 the abataavatar to be provided is a formal abataavatar or a temporary abataavatar; and requesting provision of the abataavatar image to the abataavatar providing device in case of temporary abataavatar, and providing an abataavatar image stored in the abataavatar storage area in case of formal abataavatar.

According to another aspect of the invention, there is also provided an
25 abataavatar intermediating method for executing an abataavatar intermediating system

which interfaces between a plurality of abataavatar providing systems and an abataavatar-using Internet service system or an abataavatar-using program of a user terminal via a network in order to reflect an abataavatar image, set by selection of a user among various types of abataavatar images provided from a plurality of abataavatar providing systems, on the abataavatar-using Internet service system or the abataavatar-using program of the user terminal, wherein the method includes the steps of building a user information database for storing and managing user identification information and abataavatar display information corresponding to the user identification information, and an abataavatar provider information database for storing and managing environment and data of a plurality of abataavatar providing systems; setting a representative abataavatar image to be displayed in the abataavatar-using Internet service system or the abataavatar-using program of the user terminal, and storing the representative abataavatar image into an abataavatar storage area; accessing the abataavatar intermediating system via the network and inputting user identification information; outputting a list of abataavatar providing systems connected to the abataavatar intermediating system and an abataavatar data list of each abataavatar providing system to the user; purchasing a specific abataavatar image or abataavatar item in the abataavatar data list, and storing the purchased abataavatar data into the corresponding abataavatar providing system together with the user identification information; composing an abataavatar image with the use of the abataavatar image and abataavatar item stored in a specific abataavatar providing system, and requesting the corresponding abataavatar providing system to change the representative abataavatar image into the composed abataavatar image; transmitting the abataavatar image change request to the abataavatar intermediating system; informing the abataavatar-using Internet service system or the abataavatar-using program of the user terminal on the basis of the abataavatar image change request that the abataavatar image

is changed; and receiving the abataavatar image from the corresponding abataavatar providing system according to the abataavatar image change request, and updating the representative abataavatar image of the abataavatar storage area on the basis of the received abataavatar image.

5 Preferably, the abataavatar image updating step includes receiving the abataavatar image change request, inputting a change request item (the user identification information and the abataavatar provider identification information) into a wait queue, and storing temporary abataavatar information (the user identification information and URL of the temporary abataavatar) into a database; reading the stored change request
10 item from the wait queue and requesting transmission of the abataavatar data to the corresponding abataavatar providing device; and receiving the abataavatar image transmitted from the corresponding abataavatar providing system to update the representative abataavatar image of the abataavatar storage area, and restoring the temporary abataavatar information of the user information database.

15 In this case, the abataavatar intermediating method may further include the steps of, in the abataavatar-using program informed of the abataavatar change from the abataavatar intermediating system, transmitting the abataavatar display information including user identification information, kind of abataavatar, abataavatar countenance or the like to the abataavatar intermediating system in order to display the changed
20 abataavatar image; and in the abataavatar intermediating system, determining whether the transmitted abataavatar display information is coincident with the abataavatar display information stored in the user information database; determined whether an abataavatar included in the corresponding abataavatar display information is a temporary abataavatar or a formal abataavatar in case the information is coincident; and updating and displaying
25 the representative abataavatar image on the basis of the URL of the temporary

abataavatar stored in the user information database in case of temporary abataavatar, on the while, transmitting the abataavatar image stored in the abataavatar storage area to the user terminal, and updating and displaying the representative abataavatar image in case of formal abataavatar.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other objects and aspects of the present invention will become apparent from the following description of embodiments with reference to the accompanying drawing in which:

10 FIG. 1 shows configuration of a network system in which an abataavatar intermediating method according to the present invention is realized;

FIG. 2 shows detailed configuration of an abataavatar providing system and an abataavatar intermediating system of FIG. 1;

15 FIG. 3 is a flow chart for illustrating the process of purchasing an abataavatar image or abataavatar item from a specific abataavatar providing system through the abataavatar intermediating system according to the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a flowchart for illustrating the process of changing a representative abataavatar set in the messenger of a user terminal through the abataavatar intermediating system;

20 FIG. 5 shows functional processes for executing the process of FIG. 4; and

FIG. 6 is a flowchart for illustrating the process of displaying an abataavatar on the service system or the user terminal through the abataavatar intermediating system according to the present invention.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Hereinafter, abataavatar intermediating system and method according to the present invention will be described in more detail with reference to the drawings.

Referring to FIG. 1, the abataavatar intermediating system 200 of the present invention is interposed between a plurality of abataavatar providing systems 300a to 300c and a plurality of Internet service systems 100a to 100c and provides various types of abataavatar images to each Internet service system 100a to 100c. A user accesses the abataavatar intermediating system 200 by using a user terminal 10a to 10c in which a browser program and an instant messenger program are installed. Thus, the user terminals 10a to 10c are connected to the Internet service systems 100a to 100c through a computer network 50, representatively Internet.

The network 50 is used to designate a wired Internet, which is represented by a world wide web (WWW). However, the network is not limited to WWW in the present invention, but may include other types of networks such as wireless Internet based on a wireless communication network.

Now, the abataavatar providing system 300 and the abataavatar intermediating system 200 are described in more detail with reference to FIG. 2.

First, the Internet service system 100 of the present invention is a computer system having a web server 120 for providing WWW service to the user terminal 10 and an instant messenger server 130 for providing messenger service. Preferably, the Internet service system 100 acts as a virtual service space on Internet, which provides various kinds of online service by means of abataavatar like a portal search site, a community site and an electronic commerce site.

The user terminal 10 may be a personal computer (PC), a workstation, a cellular phone capable of data communication, PDA or other smaller or larger computer systems. The user terminal 10 typically includes one or more processor, memory and I/O device.

A user of the user terminal 10, for example, wishes to access an information record stored by the web server 120. This information record may be shaped as a wired/wireless web page. This web page may be a data record such as not only text information having simple contents but also more complicatedly digitally encoded multimedia contents having software program, graphic, audio signals or picture image. In particular, the user may display his/her own ~~abata~~avatar on a monitor of the user terminal 10 through the web page.

In addition, the user terminal 10 includes an operating system (OS) for supervising and managing hardware and software of the system for better efficiency, a web browser program 2 such as Navigator or Explorer for positioning the web page, and an instant messenger program 5 which is an application program of a client for transmitting document file, graphic file or voice file through Internet. The instant messenger program 5 is capable of not only simple file transmission but also 1:1 conversation and group discussion.

Thus, a user may display his/her own ~~abata~~avatar image on the user terminal 10 without access to the Internet service system 100 by using the instant messenger 5, as well as receive an ~~abata~~avatar image of the opponent from the instant messenger server 130 and display it on the user terminal 10.

The ~~abata~~avatar intermediating system 200 of the present invention includes a web server 210, an ~~abata~~avatar intermediating module 220, and a storage device. The ~~abata~~avatar intermediating module 220 has a transaction managing unit 230, an ~~abata~~avatar change managing unit 240, a user managing unit 260, an ~~abata~~avatar display managing unit 250, and a user identification unit 221.

In addition, the storage device includes a database system such as an ~~abata~~avatar provider information database 294, a payment information database 293 and a user

information database 292, and an abataavatar storage area 291.

The transaction managing unit 230 of the abataavatar intermediating module 220 is a program module for executing an abataavatar transaction process shown in FIG. 3. That is, the transaction managing unit 230 is linked with a product transaction module 5 340 of the abataavatar providing system 300 to provide an abataavatar image list, dispatched from a plurality of abataavatar providing systems 300, to the user terminal 10 in a format of web page, transmits a purchase request to the product transaction module 340 of the corresponding abataavatar providing system when a user requests to purchase an abataavatar, receives detailed transaction information from the corresponding 10 abataavatar providing system 300, executes a payment process, and then transmits a payment result to the abataavatar providing system 300.

In addition, the transaction managing unit 230 stores transaction-related and payment-related data generated by the transaction process into the payment information database 293.

15 The abataavatar change managing unit 240 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200 is a program module for executing an abataavatar changing process shown in FIGs. 4 and 5 in connection with an abataavatar setting module 360 of the abataavatar providing system 300. When receiving an abataavatar change request from the abataavatar providing system 300, the abataavatar change managing unit 240 updating a 20 representative abataavatar data in the abataavatar storage area 291 by setting a temporary abataavatar or receiving an abataavatar data from the abataavatar providing system 300, and then informs the Internet service system 100 or the instant messenger program 5 of the user terminal 10 that the representative abataavatar is changed.

The user managing unit 260 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200 is a 25 program module for processing that a user joins to or secedes from the intermediating

system. In particular, the user managing unit 260 executes a secession process of a user in connection with a secession processing module 350 of the abataavatar providing system 300.

5 The abataavatar display managing unit 250 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200 is a program process for executing an abataavatar display process shown in FIG. 6 in connection with an abataavatar display module 330 of the abataavatar providing system 300.

10 The abataavatar display managing unit 250 receives abataavatar display information from the Internet service system 100 or the instant messenger program 5 of the user terminal 10, checks whether the received abataavatar display information is coincident with abataavatar display information stored in the user information database 292, and then provides a temporary abataavatar URL or a changed abataavatar image in the abataavatar storage area 291.

15 The user identification unit 221 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200 is connected with the Internet service system 100 in order to identify a user on the basis of logging-in information (e.g., ID and password of the user) received from the user.

The abataavatar provider information database 294 is a database for storing and managing environment and data of a plurality of the abataavatar providing systems 300a to 300c.

20 The payment information database 293 stores and manages transaction-related payment information transmitted from the transaction managing unit 230, and the user information database 292 store and manages personal information of a user (e.g., name, resident registration number, phone number, email address, address or the like), user identification information, abataavatar display information, temporary abataavatar information and so on.

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In addition, the abataavatar storage area 291 is a storage area for storing a representative abataavatar image to be displayed on the Internet service system or the user terminal, for each user. The abataavatar information stored in the abataavatar storage area 291 may include picture image, 3D graphic, moving picture, audio
5 information and so on.

The abataavatar providing system 300 of the present invention, which provides various types of abataavatar information through the aforementioned abataavatar intermediating system 200, includes a web server 310, an abataavatar providing module 320, a transaction information database 380 and an abataavatar storage area 370.

10 The abataavatar providing module 320 again includes an abataavatar display module 330, a product transaction module 340, a secession processing module 350 and an abataavatar setting module 360.

The product transaction module 340 of the abataavatar providing system 300 is a program module for executing a product transaction process shown in FIG. 3 in
15 connection with the transaction managing unit 230 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200. In other words, the product transaction module 340 provides a transaction list related to abataavatar image and abataavatar item to the abataavatar intermediating system 200, extracts and provides transaction information related to a corresponding product according to a purchase request of the transaction managing unit 230, and stores
20 the purchased abataavatar image or abataavatar item for each user.

The abataavatar setting module 360 of the abataavatar providing system 300 is a program module for executing an abataavatar changing process shown in FIGs. 4 and 5 in connection with the abataavatar change managing unit 240 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200. The abataavatar setting module 360 composes a perfect
25 abataavatar image by composing an existing abataavatar image with an abataavatar item

selected by the user and then stores the perfect abataavatar image. And then, if the user requests to change the existing representative abataavatar image with the composed abataavatar image, the abataavatar setting module 360 transmits this request to the abataavatar change managing unit 240 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200. In addition, if the changed abataavatar image is transmitted from the abataavatar change managing unit 240, the abataavatar setting module 360 extracts the abataavatar image of the corresponding user from the abataavatar storage area 370, and then transmits the abataavatar image to the abataavatar change managing unit 240.

The abataavatar display module 330 of the abataavatar providing system 300 is a program module for displaying an abataavatar image set in the Internet service system 100 or an abataavatar-using program of the user terminal, in connection with the abataavatar display managing unit 250 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200.

The secession processing module 350 of the abataavatar providing system 300 is a program module for executing a secession process of a user in connection with the user managing unit 260 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200.

The transaction information database 380 of the abataavatar providing system 300 is a database for storing and managing information related to abataavatar image and abataavatar item sold according to the request of user.

The abataavatar storage area 370 of the abataavatar providing system 300 stores abataavatar images composed by users, for each user.

As described above, if desiring to display his/her own abataavatar on the Internet service system or the instant messenger, a user accesses the abataavatar intermediating system, selects an abataavatar providing system which provides a favorite abataavatar image, purchases various abataavatar items from the abataavatar providing system, generates a perfect abataavatar image by suitably composing the purchased items with

his/her own abataavatar image, and then displays this image as a representative abataavatar image. In addition, the user may easily change an existing representative abataavatar image with an abataavatar image provided by another abataavatar providing image through the abataavatar intermediating system and then display the changed
5 abataavatar image.

Hereinafter, a method for purchasing, changing and displaying abataavatar according to the present invention is described in detail with reference to FIG. 3.

A user accesses a specific Internet service system 100 (S100), and then completes
10 user identification by inputting logging-in information to the Internet service system 100 (S105). At this time, the user identification unit 221 executes the user identification in connection with the Internet service system 100 with reference to the user information database 292 (S110).

If proved as a proper user, a transaction list including an abataavatar-related
15 product list is displayed on the user terminal. This transaction list screen shows a list of abataavatar providers connected to the abataavatar intermediating system together with detailed product information by drawing the screen from the abataavatar providing system, or receiving and processing relevant information from the abataavatar providing system (S115).

20 Then, the user checks the abataavatar product list and selects a specific product (e.g., abataavatar image or abataavatar item) (S120). After that, the user requests to purchase the selected product (e.g., by clicking a purchase button) (S125).

The transaction managing unit 230 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200 then transmits the purchase request to the product transaction module 340 of the
25 corresponding abataavatar providing system, and then extracts transaction information

corresponding to the purchase request (e.g., product information, transaction ID, price and so on) from the database. The extracted transaction information is transmitted to the transaction managing unit 230 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200 by means of the product transaction module 340 (S130 and S135).

5 If receiving the transaction information from the product transaction module 340, the transaction managing unit 230 requests a payment to the user (S140). At this time, it is preferred that an instant payment and a debit payment are all possible. If the payment is completed, the corresponding payment information is stored in the payment information database 293 (S145), and the completion of payment is informed to the
10 product transaction module 340 (S150).

 If informed of the completion of payment from the transaction managing unit 230 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200, the product transaction module 340 stores the corresponding item for the user (S155 and S160).

 By means of the above-mentioned transaction process, a user may purchase
15 various items to be combined with his/her own abataavatar image from each abataavatar providing system and then store the items in his/her own cabinet. In other words, without visiting the abataavatar providing systems one by one as conventionally, the user may purchase abataavatar-related products from a plurality of abataavatar providing systems just by accessing the abataavatar intermediating system and passing through the
20 user identification.

 If purchasing various abataavatar items through the transaction process through the abataavatar intermediating system, a user may change a representative abataavatar image through the process of FIGs. 4 and 5.

 In order to change the representative abataavatar image displayed in the Internet
25 service system or the abataavatar-using program, the user perfects an abataavatar image

with the use of the items purchased by the process of FIG. 3 from a desired abataavatar providing system. If the abataavatar image to be replaced with an existing representative abataavatar image is perfected, the user requests a change of abataavatar to the abataavatar setting module 360 of the corresponding abataavatar providing system.

5 In other words, an abataavatar change requesting unit 361 of the abataavatar setting module 360 generates change request information including user ID and abataavatar provider ID, and then transmits the change request information to the abataavatar change managing unit 240 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200 (S200).

If receiving the change request information from the abataavatar providing
10 system 300, an abataavatar change request processing module 241 of the abataavatar change managing unit 240 changes temporary abataavatar information in the user information database 292 (S205 and S210), and then an abataavatar change informing module 244 informs the Internet service system and the instant messenger program 5 of the user terminal that the abataavatar is changed (S215).

15 The Internet service system or the messenger, informed from the abataavatar change request processing module 241 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200 that the abataavatar is changed, then temporarily stores the fact (S265).

After completing the setting of the temporary abataavatar for changing the representative abataavatar image, the abataavatar change request processing module 241
20 adds a change request item in a change request wait queue 242 (S220).

As mentioned above, the abataavatar intermediating system does not process the abataavatar change request instantly but sets the temporary abataavatar so that the changed abataavatar image may be provided when a request for display the abataavatar is received from the Internet service system or the messenger before the process for the
25 abataavatar change request is finished.

An abataavatar transmission module 243 of the abataavatar change managing unit 240 reads a change request item from a head of the change request wait queue 242 (S225), and then requests transmission of the changed abataavatar image to an abataavatar transmission server 362 on the basis of the change request information
5 designated by the change request item (S230).

The abataavatar transmission server 362 then extracts the perfect changed abataavatar image from the abataavatar storage area 370 on the response to the changed abataavatar transmission request including user ID from the abataavatar transmission module 243 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200, and then transmits the
10 extracted changed abataavatar data to the abataavatar transmission module 243 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200 (S235 and S240).

If receiving the changed abataavatar data (S245), the abataavatar transmission module 243 updates an existing abataavatar image stored in the abataavatar storage area 291 into the changed abataavatar data (S250).

15 After updating the abataavatar data, the abataavatar transmission module 243 restores the temporary abataavatar information of the user information database 292 as it was (S255), and the abataavatar change informing module 244 informs the Internet service system 100 and the instant messenger program 5 of the user terminal 10 that the abataavatar is changed (S260).

20 If being informed from the abataavatar change informing module 244 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200 that the abataavatar is changed, the Internet service system and/or the messenger temporarily memorizes this fact (S270).

If the user newly accesses the Internet service system or newly executes the instant messenger in the state of already requesting the change of his/her own
25 representative abataavatar image, the changed abataavatar image is displayed through the

Internet service system or the instant messenger as shown in FIG. 6.

Referring to FIG. 6, if a user accesses the Internet service system or executes the messenger of the user terminal, the Internet service system or the messenger transmits abataavatar display information to the abataavatar display managing unit 250 of the abataavatar intermediating system 200 on the basis of the change history of the temporarily stored abataavatar. If receiving the abataavatar display information from the Internet service system or the messenger, the abataavatar display managing unit 250 compares the received display information with display information stored in the user information database 292 in order to determine whether they are coincident (S300 and
10 S305).

If it is checked that the display information is coincident, the abataavatar display managing unit 250 determines whether the abataavatar to be displayed is a temporary abataavatar (S310). At this time, if the abataavatar is determined as a temporary abataavatar, the abataavatar display managing unit 250 requests transmission of the corresponding abataavatar image to the abataavatar providing system on the basis of a
15 temporary abataavatar URL in the user information database (S315).

If receiving the request for transmission of the abataavatar image from the abataavatar intermediating system 200, the abataavatar display module 330 of the abataavatar providing system 300 calls a resource corresponding to the temporary abataavatar URL from the abataavatar storage area 370, and then transmits the called
20 abataavatar data to the user terminal (S320, S325 and S330).

On the other hand, if it is determined that the abataavatar to be displayed is a formal abataavatar in the step S310, the abataavatar display managing unit 250 reads the abataavatar data from the abataavatar storage area 291, and then transmits the abataavatar
25 data to the user terminal (S350 and S355).

As described above, if receiving the changed abataavatar data from the abataavatar providing system or the abataavatar intermediating system, the Internet service system or the messenger of the user terminal updates an existing representative abataavatar image into the received abataavatar image and then displays the received
5 abataavatar image (S360 and S365).

APPLICABILITY TO THE INDUSTRY

The abataavatar intermediating system and method according to the present invention allow a user to set various types of images, provided from a plurality of
10 abataavatar providing systems, as his/her own abataavatar without changing the Internet service system. In particular, the present invention enables to easily change and display an existing abataavatar image into an entirely different type of abataavatar image.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An abataavatar intermediating system comprising:

an abataavatar providing device for storing abataavatar data having abataavatar
5 image and abataavatar item image and providing the abataavatar data through a network;

an abataavatar service device for receiving the abataavatar data from the
abataavatar providing device and supplying the abataavatar data in a shape of web
document or the like;

a user terminal for outputting the abataavatar data through the abataavatar service
10 device or a client program like a messenger; and

an abataavatar intermediating device for introducing the abataavatar data
provided from at least one abataavatar providing device, intermediating transaction of the
abataavatar data between a selected one of the abataavatar providing devices and the user
terminal, receiving a changed abataavatar image from the corresponding abataavatar
15 providing device in response to an abataavatar change request, and then changing a
representative abataavatar image of the abataavatar service device or the client program
into the changed abataavatar image.

2. An abataavatar intermediating system according to claim 1, wherein the
20 abataavatar providing device includes:

a storage means for storing the purchased abataavatar data for each user;

an abataavatar composing means for generating a perfect abataavatar image by
combining the abataavatar image stored in the storage means with various abataavatar
item images;

25 means for providing the perfect abataavatar image to the abataavatar

intermediating device in response to the change request of the user; and

means for providing transaction information of the corresponding abataavatar data to the abataavatar intermediating device in response to a purchase request of a specific abataavatar data from the user.

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3. An abataavatar intermediating system according to claim 2, wherein the abataavatar intermediating device includes:

an abataavatar purchasing means for providing an abataavatar data list from at least one abataavatar providing device to users, transmitting a purchase request of a specific abataavatar data from a user to the corresponding abataavatar providing device when the user requests for purchasing the abataavatar data, outputting the abataavatar purchasing information received from the abataavatar providing device to the user, receiving payment information from the user, and then transmitting payment settlement to the abataavatar providing device, and

15 an abataavatar storage means for storing a composed abataavatar image transmitted from the abataavatar providing device for each user.

4. An abataavatar intermediating system according to claim 3, further comprising an abataavatar changing means for receiving and storing an abataavatar image change request and a changed abataavatar data from a specific abataavatar providing device, and informing the abataavatar service device or the client program of the user terminal that the abataavatar image is changed.

5. An abataavatar intermediating system according to claim 4, wherein the abataavatar changing means includes:

means for receiving change request information from a specific abataavatar providing device, inputting a change request item into a wait queue, and storing temporary abataavatar information into a database;

5 means for reading the stored change request item from the wait queue and requesting transmission of the abataavatar data to the corresponding abataavatar providing device;

means for receiving and storing the abataavatar data transmitted from the abataavatar providing device and restoring the temporary abataavatar information stored in the database; and

10 means for informing the abataavatar service device or the client program of the user terminal that the abataavatar image is changed.

6. An abataavatar intermediating system according to claim 5,
wherein the change request item includes user identification information and
15 abataavatar provider identification information.

7. An abataavatar intermediating system according to claim 5,
wherein the temporary abataavatar information includes user identification
information and a temporary abataavatar URL.

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8. An abataavatar intermediating system according to claim 5,
wherein the abataavatar intermediating device further includes an abataavatar
display means for providing the abataavatar image stored in the abataavatar storage
means to the client program or the abataavatar service device in response to an
25 abataavatar display request from the client program of the user terminal or the

abataavatar service device.

9. An abataavatar intermediating system according to claim 8, wherein the abataavatar display means performs:

5 receiving abataavatar display information including user identification information, kind of abataavatar, abataavatar countenance or the like from the client program of the user terminal or the abataavatar service device;

determining on the basis of the abataavatar display information whether the abataavatar to be provided is a formal abataavatar or a temporary abataavatar; and

10 requesting provision of the abataavatar image to the abataavatar providing device in case of temporary abataavatar, and providing an abataavatar image stored in the abataavatar storage means in case of formal abataavatar.

10. An abataavatar intermediating method for executing an abataavatar
15 intermediating system which interfaces between a plurality of abataavatar providing systems and an abataavatar-using Internet service system or an abataavatar-using program of a user terminal via a network in order to reflect an abataavatar image, set by selection of a user among various types of abataavatar images provided from a plurality of abataavatar providing systems, on the abataavatar-using Internet service system or the
20 abataavatar-using program of the user terminal, the method comprising the steps of:

building a user information database for storing and managing user identification information and abataavatar display information corresponding to the user identification information, and an abataavatar provider information database for storing and managing environment and data of a plurality of abataavatar providing systems;

25 setting a representative abataavatar image to be displayed in the abataavatar-using

Internet service system or the abataavatar-using program of the user terminal, and storing the representative abataavatar image into an abataavatar storage means;

accessing the abataavatar intermediating system via the network and inputting user identification information;

5 outputting a list of abataavatar providing systems connected to the abataavatar intermediating system and an abataavatar data list of each abataavatar providing system to the user;

 purchasing a specific abataavatar image or abataavatar item in the abataavatar data list, and storing the purchased abataavatar data into the corresponding abataavatar
10 providing system together with the user identification information;

 composing an abataavatar image with the use of the abataavatar image and abataavatar item stored in a specific abataavatar providing system, and requesting the corresponding abataavatar providing system to change the representative abataavatar image into the composed abataavatar image;

15 transmitting the abataavatar image change request to the abataavatar intermediating system;

 informing the abataavatar-using Internet service system or the abataavatar-using program of the user terminal on the basis of the abataavatar image change request that the abataavatar image is changed; and

20 receiving the abataavatar image from the corresponding abataavatar providing system according to the abataavatar image change request, and updating the representative abataavatar image of the abataavatar storage means on the basis of the received abataavatar image.

25 11. An abataavatar intermediating method according to claim 10, wherein the

abataavatar image updating step includes:

receiving the abataavatar image change request, inputting a change request item (the user identification information and the abataavatar provider identification information) into a wait queue, and storing temporary abataavatar information (the user
5 identification information and URL of the temporary abataavatar) into a database;

reading the stored change request item from the wait queue and requesting transmission of the abataavatar data to the corresponding abataavatar providing device;
and

receiving the abataavatar image transmitted from the corresponding abataavatar
10 providing system to update the representative abataavatar image of the abataavatar storage means, and restoring the temporary abataavatar information of the user information database.

12. An abataavatar intermediating method according to claim 11, further
15 comprising the steps of:

in the abataavatar-using program informed of the abataavatar change from the abataavatar intermediating system:

transmitting the abataavatar display information including user identification information, kind of abataavatar, abataavatar countenance or the like to the abataavatar
20 intermediating system in order to display the changed abataavatar image; and

in the abataavatar intermediating system:

determining whether the transmitted abataavatar display information is coincident with the abataavatar display information stored in the user information database;

determined whether an abataavatar included in the corresponding abataavatar
25 display information is a temporary abataavatar or a formal abataavatar in case the

information is coincident; and

updating and displaying the representative abataavatar image on the basis of the URL of the temporary abataavatar stored in the user information database in case of temporary abataavatar,

- 5 transmitting the abataavatar image stored in the abataavatar storage means to the user terminal, and updating and displaying the representative abataavatar image in case of formal abataavatar.

ABSTRACT

System and method for allowing users to freely select and use various abataavatar images provided by a plurality of abataavatar image providers are disclosed.

5 The abataavatar intermediating system includes an abataavatar providing device for storing abataavatar data having abataavatar image and abataavatar item image and providing the abataavatar data through a network; an abataavatar service device for receiving the abataavatar data from the abataavatar providing device and supplying the abataavatar data in a shape of web document or the like; a user terminal for outputting
10 the abataavatar data through the abataavatar service device or a client program like a messenger; and an abataavatar intermediating device for introducing the abataavatar data provided from at least one abataavatar providing device, intermediating transaction of the abataavatar data between a selected one of the abataavatar providing devices and the user terminal, receiving a changed abataavatar image from the corresponding abataavatar
15 providing device in response to an abataavatar change request, and then changing a representative abataavatar image of the abataavatar service device or the client program into the changed abataavatar image.